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SAIPAN TRIBUNE

EXCHANGE RATES

	YESTERDAY	PREVIOUS
YEN	105.255	105.145
PESO	39.9925	40.135
HK \$	7.7705	7.7709
BAHT	38.585	39.015
RUPEE	43.3948	43.385
WON	1202.25	1205.00

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THURSDAY 28 OCTOBER 1999

25¢

Gov't owes landowners \$80 million

By BENHUR C. SALADARES
Staff Reporter

The government intends to address a huge backlog in unpaid settlement totaling to \$80 million it owes landowners



Reyes

whose properties were acquired for right-of-way or easement projects, according to House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Karl T. Reyes.

He said these land acquisition dealings were done as far back as 1990 and ranged from a small lot area of 11 square meters to more than 7,000 sqm.

"They have not been fully paid or not paid yet by the government," Reyes told reporters in an interview yesterday. "We just want to see how we can address this."

Since payment for these obligations were not included in the fiscal budget of the government for the last two years, the Legislature and the administration will try to work out a scheme to reduce the debts.

Close to 200 individuals on Saipan alone have been awaiting payment and dozens more on Rota and Tinian have yet to receive full settlement, according to Reyes.

The government, in fact, has yet

See Gov't on Page 4

DUE TO PRESENCE OF PCB

Cemetery off-limits

By LINDABLUE F. ROMERO
Staff Reporter

With only a few days left before All Soul's Day, Gov. Pedro P. Tenorio yesterday ordered the temporary closure of the Lower Base Cemetery to protect the people against possible contamination from polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), a cancer-causing chemical present in the area.

Tanapag residents have demanded an immediate cleanup of the area as they condemned the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers during a recent public hearing for failing to ensure that the people are safe from the harmful effects of PCBs.

The governor has expressed concern on the lingering presence of PCBs at the cemetery, where there's a high concentration of toxic waste left way back in the '60s.

"(T)he CNMI Government, in the interest of public health, is closing the Tanapag (Lower Base) Cemetery until the PCB contamination within the cemetery is remediated properly by the USACOE," said a press release issued by the Governor's Public Information Office.

Contractors of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers were scheduled to arrive this week to install a temporary cap of plastic and crushed stone over the most contaminated areas of the cemetery until remediation measures are carried out.

But due to the delay in their arrival, the CNMI government decided to close the cemetery until it is considered safe. Although the Division of Environmental Quality has warned the public against visiting the cemetery due to health hazards from ex-

posure to PCB-contaminated soil, many people have been trooping to Lower Base to spruce up the graveyard of their relatives.

A temporary cap will be placed in the most contaminated areas to reduce the community's exposure from airborne soil particles (dust) and to

responsible to take these with them," said Benigno Sablan, a community leader in the village.

The CNMI government will cordon off the cemetery, as it appealed to the public to refrain from going near the area.

The public is also requested to call

Day instead of residents going to the cemetery.

Investigation showed that some parts of Tanapag village and the Lower Base Cemetery have been contaminated with PCBs and dioxins. DEQ was first notified about the presence of electrical capacitors scattered



LFR

DANGEROUS

Despite warning signs, people still visit the Lower Base Cemetery which is contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls, a cancer causing chemical.

reduce the exposure for those who insists on visiting the cemetery.

"We do not want any plastic or gravel cover as temporary covers. We want the U.S. Army Corps to make sure that we are safe. They brought this trash here so they should be made

the Division of Environmental Quality for any inquiries regarding risks and possible precautionary measure.

The government's press release also said Bishop Tomas Camacho will say mass at the Tanapag Church for the people in the village on All Soul's

throughout Tanapag in 1988.

These capacitors were used then as boundary markers, roadblocks for driveways, windbreakers for barbecue sites and headstones.

See Cemetery on Page 4



Kada dia i amiguho malag i plasan batkon aire para u fanagam. Maifaisen dispues haye ha nanaña, ilegña: "Ayo i inedaho palaoan ginen katalagon Sears Roebuck". A Saina!

PSS properties are for official use only

■ PSS Commissioner seeks probe on Hopwood teacher's alleged use of fax machine to send inmates' letter

By MAR-VIC CAGURANGAN
Staff Reporter

Education Commissioner Rita Hocog-Inos yesterday warned public school teachers and other employees of the Public School System against using government resources for unofficial activities.

She also said she will look into re-

ports that a teacher at Hopwood Junior High School had used the school's fax machine to send a petition written by three inmates to Gov. Pedro P. Tenorio.

"We don't endorse such kind of activities. We all know that we are not supposed to take advantage of public funds for personal gain," Inos said.

Public Safety Commissioner Charles Ingram said last week his department is investigating Hopwood teacher Magdalena Concepcion, who allegedly faxed a handwritten petition from inmates Shawn Appleby, Melvin Basa, and Jeronimo Ada.

The three, who broke out of the Susupe jail last Oct. 10, explained in



Reyes

having sent the petition via fax machine, saying she "personally delivered" it to the governor.

Ingram said Concepcion had done a "great disservice" to the community by helping the prisoners.

Inos said PSS will not interfere into

their petition why they escaped. The fax copy of the petition papers showed Hopwood's identification number.

Concepcion earlier denied having sent the petition via fax machine, saying she "personally delivered" it to the governor.

Ingram said Concepcion had done a "great disservice" to the community by helping the prisoners.

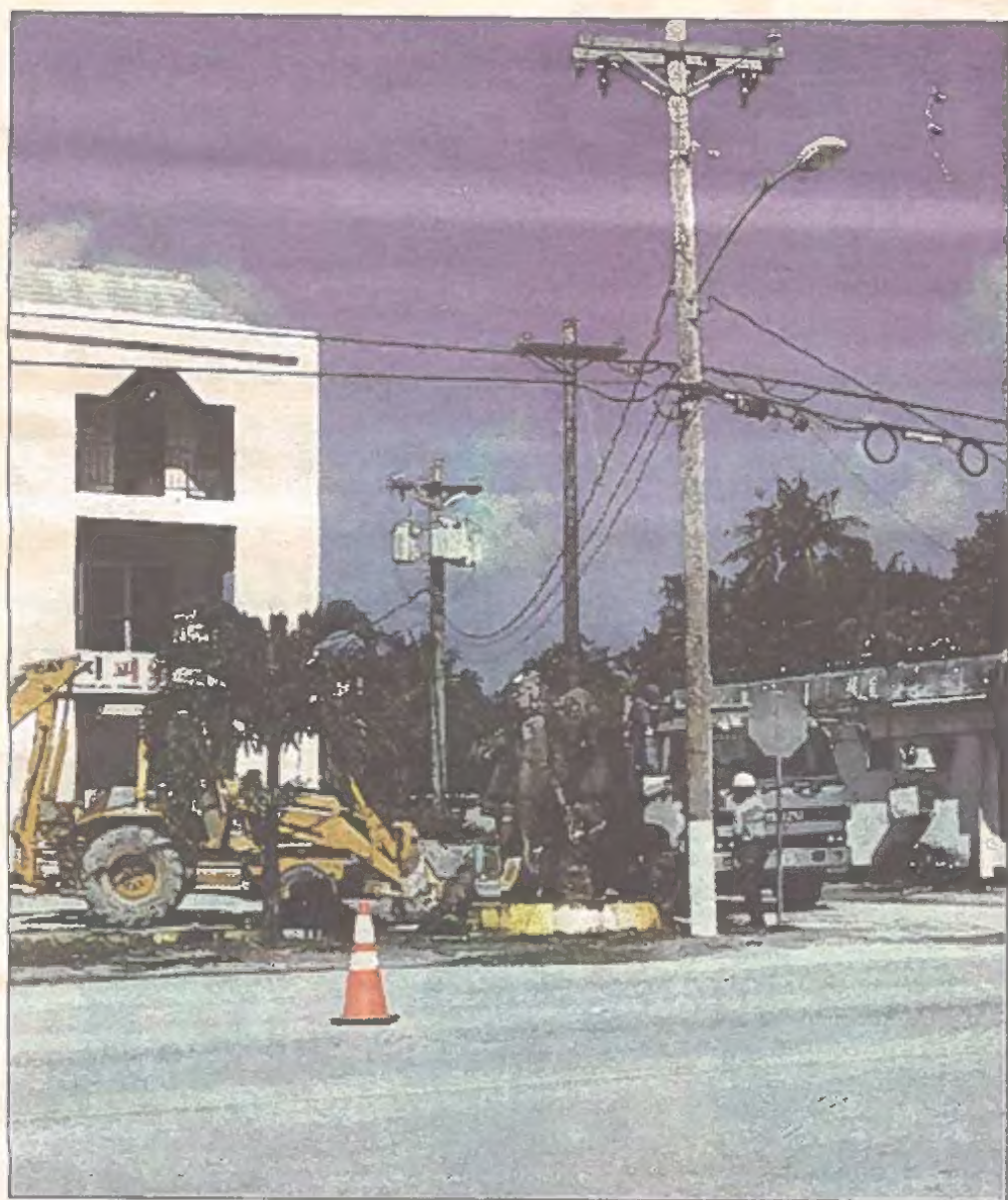
Inos said PSS will not interfere into

its employees' personal activities "outside the school hours."

"But during work hours, from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., we are PSS employees. We cannot act as private individuals in a place of employment because PSS does not endorse that kind of activity," Inos said.

The commissioner said she awaits Hopwood Principal Lou Mendiola's report on Concepcion's alleged action.

Inos said she will issue a memo to all school principals to remind them of their obligation to ensure that PSS properties are being used only for official purposes.



THE LAST ONE, BUT GONE

Crew workers dismantle the remains of a Flame Tree that used to stand in this corner of Beach Road in Chalan Kanoa. The last one along this stretch of road in the area, the tree was cut to give way to the installation of utility posts.

JOHN S. DELROSARIO, JR.

Munson awards \$4.2 M to non-heir

By MAR-VIC CAGURANGAN
Staff Reporter

Federal Judge Alex Munson has awarded \$4.2 million to a boy who had failed in genetic testing which was supposed to establish his paternal relationship with the late millionaire Larry Hillblom.

Munson ruled in favor of Vo Minh Tan, his Thai mother Thi Thuy Dung and his guardian James Hollman, based on the Oct. 16 ruling issued in Hawaii by arbitrator Susan M. Ichinose.

Ichinose ruled that the defendants — Naoko Imeong, Junior Larry Hillbloom, David Moncrief, Jellian Cuartero, Milagros Feliciano and Mercedita Feliciano — breached the protocol contained in the Sibling Testing Agreement.

"The agreement among putative heirs to pool information and for sibling testing is legally valid, binding, and enforceable," Ichinose said in her decision.



Hillblom

"Based on the agreement, results of DNA tests were supposed to have been kept confidential," said Bruce

Jorgensen, attorney for Tan, Dung, and Hollman.

The genetic testing was intended to eliminate "unqualified" heirs to the Hillblom estate.

Cuartero, Junior Hillbloom, and Mercedita Feliciano, passed the DNA tests, prompting the Hillblom estate to settle their claims. The probate court approved two weeks ago the distribution of their inheritance. Each of the three children stands to get \$23 million.

Jorgensen said the original intent of the sibling testing agreement was to place the supposed heirs "in a better bargaining position with the Hillblom

estate."

The DNA test itself, according to Jorgensen, was not admissible as evidence in the CNMI to prove paternity claims.

Jorgensen said the Hillblom estate had offered to settle the claims even before the court could rule on the validity of DNA tests as evidence in paternity lawsuits.

"If the DNA test was not considered, my client had the strongest evidence [to prove his paternity claims] based on depositions heard in Vietnam," Jorgensen said.

In his Oct. 20 decision, Munson ordered the defendants to stop the distribution of the estate cash until the \$4.2 million arbitration award to the Hollman claimants is paid.

"If there was any prejudice to the participating parties, it was for their own making when they negotiated the terms of their arbitration agreement. In any event all parties suffered identical prejudice," Munson said.

NMI's hemodialysis unit lauded

The California-based Transpacific Renal Network has given recognition to the renal hemodialysis section of the Commonwealth Health Center as one of the top units that provide quality care to patients undergoing dialysis.

Public Health Secretary Joseph Kevin Villagomez said such accomplishment shows the commitment of the hospital in making sure that the best possible care is provided to the people in the community.

"It was a lot of hard work for everyone in the team to earn this recognition considering the problems we had to hurdle," he said.

Dr. Hilmer Negrete, director of hemodialysis unit of CHC, said the team has to submit regular progress report to each patient undergoing dialysis treatment to Transpacific Network.

The quality of care is measured through a system called core indicators, which include adequacy dialysis, anemia and nutritional status. "We have had great improvement as this has become our standard," said Negrete.

Transpacific Network supervises the work of dialysis units in 10 areas, which also include Northern California, Hawaii, Guam and American Samoa.

Expansion of the hospital's hemodialysis section and construction of the new public

health building is included in the list of Capital Improvement Projects that will be immediately carried out once the \$30 million loan from the Bank of Guam is released.

Although the CNMI government has been experiencing financial difficulties, Gov. Pedro P. Tenorio has made a

commitment to provide the needed financial support to DPH to ensure that health care is not jeopardized.

Compared to the U.S. mainland which has a 9 percent annual growth of people who undergo dialysis treatment, the Northern Marianas has a 20 percent average annual increase.

Although the dialysis unit has been recognized in providing excellent care, Negrete said they still want to prevent people from having to go through this kind of treatment through an educational campaign.

"While we are grateful for having this facility and a very good staff, we would rather not see them go through this at all," said Villagomez.

Three years ago, there were only 44 patients in the hemodialysis unit of CHC. The number shot up to 71 in 1999, an alarming increase for an

island with a small population.

With the growing number of patients undergoing dialysis at the Commonwealth Health Center, kidney transplant is one option which is being made available to them by the government.

Recently, DPH signed an agreement with the San Francisco-based California Pacific Medical Center to provide medical care to patients from the CNMI who would be sent for kidney transplant.

Dr. Sharon Inokuchi, a transplant nephrologist and vice chairman of the department of transplantation at the Medical Center, examined the patients who are on dialysis treatment at CHC to find out the possible candidates for a kidney transplant.

Unfortunately, only one-third of the patients here are healthy enough to undergo kidney operation.

Dialysis treatment costs \$7,000 a month per patient. A kidney operation runs from \$50,000 to \$70,000 and can even go higher for more complicated cases.

Villagomez said the main focus of the hospital campaign is awareness on diabetes, which is being blamed for kidney failure. "We know it will take us a long time to change the mind set and lifestyle of the people but it is extremely important that we do that," he said.

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